DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 641 SP 041 718

AUTHOR	Kesson, Kathleen
TITLE	Alienated Labor and the Quality of Teachers' Lives: How Teachers in Low-Performing Schools Experience Their Work.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	28p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Low Achievement; Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Alienation; *Teaching Conditions; Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how teachers in city schools are experiencing the labor process. It summarizes the concept of alienation, beginning with Hegel's metaphysical teleology, which was overturned by Feuerback and found its historical materialist expression in Marx's theory of alienated labor. The paper then revisits some of the work of critical education scholars who have applied versions of the theory of alienated labor to the work of teachers. It sets aspects of the theory alongside the responses of teachers interviewed in a preliminary study on how educators working in low performing schools experience the labor process, how they understand the larger political/economic issues, how they express critique, and how they resist alienation. The paper asserts that there is a contradiction apparent in policies supposedly designed to promote social equity for all students, which have as their consequence the production of alienated labor for teachers. In contrast to this, the paper highlights a model of teacher preparation and professional development that supports the development and exercise of quality professional judgments, suggesting that this is the most promising route to lasting and genuine teacher control over their own labor and meaningful and sustained improvement. (Contains 32 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Alienated Labor and the Quality of Teachers' Lives: How Teachers in Low-Performing Schools Experience Their Work

Kathleen Kesson
Long Island University – Brooklyn Campus
1 University Plaza
Brooklyn, NY 11201-5372

(718) 488-1388
Kathleen.Kesson@liu.edu

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kathleen Kesson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction/Context

As a progressive minded curriculum scholar, I have watched with alarm as we have slid down the slippery slope from voluntary state standards,[1] through systemic reform, through increasing demands for accountability, and through the high stakes testing craze (which is by no means over), now landing, for the moment, in a curricular space inhabited by artifacts that many of us hoped had been relegated to the dustbin of educational history: scripted curricula, teacher-proof texts, a reliance on "scientifically-proven" educational research (didn't we fight the positivism battle in the 1980's?), unprecedented consolidation of federal control over the curriculum (as well as federal attempts to control what research studies are available and to whom), the triumph of the managerial paradigm, and heavy doses of behaviorism in the classroom, especially when dealing with poor students and students of color. This remarkable regression of curriculum policy has been accomplished in part by the cooptation of left/liberal language of equity and solidarity and encapsulated in the phrase "no child left behind." However, if we situate these developments within the larger socio-economic-political currents of the present historical moment, which I have elsewhere termed "the crisis in democracy" (Henderson & Kesson, 2003; Kesson, 2003; Kesson, Koliba, Paxton, 2002), a number of questions need to be raised about the underlying aims and intentions of such policy.

While it is difficult to capture the exact nature and extent of the crisis of democracy, given the turmoil of the moment and rapidly changing political developments, the crisis embodies a number of threats, including, but not limited to: the decline of voter participation, the growing gap between rich and poor, the globalization of economic interests, the concentration and corporatization of the media, the hegemonic nature of consumerism, the threat to civil liberties under Homeland Security, and the latest military/imperial ambitions of the United States. If we accept as a given this paradigm of "crisis," we must then ask of current educational policy: what is to be gained by a set of curricular policies designed to limit students' exposure to critical thinking and meaning making, to deskill teachers, especially teachers in low performing (i.e. inner city) schools, and to punish students and schools who do not perform well on high stakes tests? In New York City, a massive restructuring is taking place that will effectively centralize administrative control over city education and standardize much of the

[1] In the interest of self-disclosure, I served on the Steering Committee for the development of the Framework for Standards and Assessment in the State of Vermont.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED 479 641

SP041718

curriculum, especially in reading, writing, and mathematics. Possibly not since the unification of all New York City schools under one administrative roof in the early years of the twentieth century, resulting in what Tyack called "the one best system" (1974), has such a massive restructuring taken place. The issues today are very similar to the issues of that time: city schools are filled with large numbers of poor children, immigrant children, children who do not yet speak English, and now, children of color, in contrast to the largely Catholic Irish and southern European immigrants of the last century.

Among the initiatives that were recently announced at the New York Urban League's Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium were the reorganization of the Department of Education's management structure into a unified, streamlined system, the adoption of a single, coherent system-wide approach for instruction in reading, writing and math, and the creation of "parent engagement boards" to replace democratically elected community school boards. Two hundred top scoring schools have been exempted from the standardized curriculum. Reasons given for the changes are the continued low performance of city schoolchildren on standardized tests, and related to this, the problem of high mobility of children who live in poverty, including well over 16,000 homeless children in NYC alone. There is a high turnover rate of teachers in low performing schools, as well as many new teachers working without credentials or teaching out of their area of certification. More rigorous top down controls on curriculum and teaching are intended to solve these problems.

In this current iteration of school reform, in NYC as elsewhere, the principle of "accountability" is the preferred weapon in the arsenal of the conservative educational restoration. Testing, particularly, is the mechanism of accountability; it is the means by which we ensure that teachers are performing their teaching function properly, that administrators are performing their supervisory functions properly, and that students are complying with the curricular expectations of the state. Accountability, says Gabbard (2000), "implies hierarchical institutional structures and a certain economy of power requisite to the maintenance and vitality of those structures" (p. 54). The pressure to improve test scores ripples throughout the system, and in this paper I examine some of the results of this on teachers' professional lives. The accountability discourse has a Janus-like nature: while elite voices speak from one face about fixing failing schools, providing equity and access, raising the standards for all, and leaving no child behind, the muted voice of the hidden face reminds us that it is the nature of the modern administrative state to disperse power (accountability) "in accordance with a mode of rationality which dictates that any such dispersal must ultimately result in a strengthening of that power" (p. 55).

Looking at the big picture, as Marxist theorizing would have us do, it is only logical that the state would attempt to consolidate its power right now. First, the national ruling elite and its corporate media are engaged in a massive public relations campaign to manufacture consent to new military, political and economic ambitions. Second, there is the threat of terrorism and the discourse of "homeland security." Third, a vocal and active opposition is emerging to elite policies, at home and abroad. And last, the economy is in recession, or nearing it, which points toward the possibilities of increasing domestic

unrest. At times like these, all of the state apparatus, including the educational apparatus, must be brought into line. The logic of this effort requires conformity, compliance, and control at all levels of the system. A Marxist analysis, therefore, requires that we examine the hidden face of Janus, the ways in which contemporary reform efforts, while couched in language of equity, liberty, and excellence, are in fact designed to consolidate state power and put the damper on potential political dissent.

My vantage point in all this is as a teacher educator in an urban teacher education program located in downtown Brooklyn, at Long Island University. Our students come from the surrounding Brooklyn neighborhoods of Fort Greene, Bushwick, Flatbush, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, Crown Heights, Sunset Park and Brighton Beach. Eighty percent of our students are people of color, fifty one percent of African descent, eighty-two percent are women, virtually all are working class, and many are recent immigrants: from the Caribbean, Russia, China, Korea, South America and elsewhere. Many of our students are bidialectical and many are bilingual. Eighty five percent of our graduate students are uncertified teachers working in city schools. Our program has been designed to capitalize on the cultural and linguistic strengths our students bring with them to the task of teaching in urban environments. We are one of the few teacher education institutions in New York State that does not require passage of the Liberal Arts and Sciences part of the NYSTCE prior to admissions (a testing mandate that has effectively shut the door on many minority teacher candidates). At the heart of our teacher preparation program is a course sequence of three teacher research courses, based on the phenomenological descriptive review processes developed by Pat Carini (2001) and others (Himley, 2000) and designed to help our students gain insight into their teaching and their students' learning. In these research, or "Inquiry" courses, our students are encouraged to be systematically reflective about their teaching, to innovate in their classrooms based on ideas of best practice and student and teacher interests, and to document student work and their own teaching practice. We also have strong threads of critical pedagogy, social justice, the valuing of difference, and educating for democracy running through all of our courses. Many of our students suffer tremendous internal and external conflict between a teacher education program dedicated to the development of wise judgment, reflection, and autonomy, and work situations in which they are expected to refrain from exercising judgment, in which they have virtually no time for reflection, and in which they function as automatons. It was in listening to their stories that I began to revisit this notion of alienated labor.

My other lens on this is a recently completed book by myself and Jim Henderson entitled Curriculum Wisdom: Educational Decisions in Democratic Societies (2003). In this text, we suggest a model of professional development that draws upon seven distinct but overlapping inquiry modes that, taken together, contribute to the quality of educational decisions. Behind this model is the notion that lasting and meaningful school reform needs to be aligned with approaches to professional development that build upon teachers' capacity to make informed judgments. With Fullan and Hargreaves (1996), we agree that

> ...approaches which seek to regiment and regulate the teacher's actions; to constrain and contract their opportunities for discretionary judgement (sic) and to standardize the process and the products of learning, undermine teachers' professionalism and the moral principles on which it is based" (p. 19).

In other words, one of the most effective ways to improve education is to improve the quality of teachers' judgments. But in schools most in need of improvement, opportunities for teachers to develop and exercise their judgment are extremely limited. In place of a serious commitment to improving the quality of teacher preparation, and the quality of teacher judgments, we have a routinized, systematized top down structure increasingly designed to micro-manage teacher labor. The irony of this is that many of the practices under such close surveillance and management are what many education scholars would agree are "best practices" (cooperative grouping, balanced literacy, problem-solving mathematics, etc.); however in their dogmatic institutionalization, they become reified, acquiring the character of "thing-ness" as opposed to meaningful events that arise out of authentic human transactions. But apparently, educational decisions that matter are no longer educational decisions at all – they are political decisions. And so they must be analyzed within a political framework.

Marxist and neo-Marxist theorizing have provided education scholars with a compelling theoretical framework with which to analyze the interrelationships of schooling and the political economy. They have applied this analysis to a number of educational problems: textbooks (Apple, 1986); curriculum (Stanley, 1992), literacy (Shannon, 1989), teaching (Kanpol, 1994) etc. While there is much in current educational policy that might benefit from a Marxist analysis, in this paper my application is narrow, focusing on how teachers in city schools are experiencing the labor process. I begin with a somewhat lengthy summary of the concept of alienation, beginning with Hegel's metaphysical teleology, which was overturned by Feuerbach, and found its historical materialist expression in Marx's theory of alienated labor. I then revisit some of the work of critical education scholars who have applied versions of the theory of alienated labor to the work of teachers. I set aspects of the theory alongside the responses of teachers interviewed in a preliminary study on how educators working in low performing schools experience the labor process, how they understand the larger political/economic issues, how they express critique, and how they resist alienation. I examine what I see as a contradiction apparent in policies supposedly designed to promote social equity for students, which have as their consequence the production of alienated labor for teachers. In contrast to this, I highlight a model of teacher preparation and professional development that supports the development and exercise of *quality professional judgments*, which, I suggest, is the most promising route to lasting and genuine teacher control over their own labor as well as meaningful and sustained school improvement.

Theoretical foundation of alienation and alienated labor.

Beginning with Hegel. Hegel's concept of alienation was a metaphysical one, proposed as a critique of the dominant theology of the time—a theology that posited an absolute separation between the earthly and the divine. Hegel, in contrast to the existing dualistic philosophy, conceived of the reconciliation of the infinite spirit (God) and the finite human spirit, and was critical of the prevailing religious consciousness which projected this possibility of reconciliation into the far-off future (a reconciliation which did not imply a "becoming" but rather a "being with"). Hegel proposed the concept of an Absolute Idea, or Mind, as a dynamic Self engaged in a circular process of alienation and dealienation. God (the Absolute Idea) becomes alienated from itself (externalized) in nature, then returns from its self- alienation in the Finite Mind ("Man"-- who is the Absolute in the process of dealienation). Self-alienation and dealienation are in this way the form of being of the Absolute. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is, in essence "the itinerary of the soul, which rises to spirit through the intermediary of consciousness" (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 11). This circular process is a history of consciousness engaged in experience, a negative dialectic similar to Plato's moment of skepticism in which naive consciousness is purified. In order to understand the role of negation in this process (a determinate negation which engenders new content), one must assume that the whole is always immanent in the development of consciousness. The movement of consciousness is seen as a continual transcendence, a going-beyond-itself in which knowledge is disquieted, a disquiet that remains unassuaged as long as the end point of the process is not reached. This end point, or goal, is a point at which consciousness discovers itself, and beyond which knowledge need not go. The whole development is characterized by an immanent finality, glimpsed by the philosopher (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 17).

In his Early Theological Writings, Hegel savagely assaulted historical Christianity as a corruption of the original teachings of Jesus. His interpretation of these teachings was one of the self-actualization of man as a divinely perfect being, an actualization that he believed Jesus to embody. To him, Jesus did not represent God become man, but man become God. This became the key idea upon which the edifice of Hegelianism was constructed, that:

> There is no difference between the human nature and the divine. They are not two separate things with an impassable gulf between them. The absolute self in man, the homo noumenon, is not merely Godlike, as Kant would have it; it is God. Consequently, in so far as man strives to become 'like God', he is simply striving to be his own real self. And in deifying himself, he is simply recognizing his own true nature. Such recognition is preceded by 'faith' which is a middle state between non-recognition and recognition of the self as divine; it is a 'trust in one's own self'. Beyond it lies full scale recognition; when divinity has pervaded all the threads of one's consciousness, directed all one's relations with the world, and now breathes throughout one's being (Hegel, 1948, p. 226).

Hegel perceived "culture" and "alienation" as kindred concepts. The first moment of development is one of immersion in nature, and is a moment which demands negation-

"the self can gain its universality only through that opposition - the alienation which is culture" (Hyppolite, 1974, p.385). For Hegel, self can only be realized through the mediation of alienation or estrangement, a process which is not an organic, harmonious growth, but one of rediscovery through self-opposition and separation. Culture thus becomes the result of the alienation of natural man. Contrary to the pedagogy of the Enlightenment, which posited the development of reason as a continuous, linear path, Hegel presents us with an educational moment in which the self becomes unequal to, and thus negates itself, thus gaining universality (Hinchman, 1984, p.250)—that educational moment is the moment of alienation, or estrangement. Robert Tucker neatly summarizes this process for us by the application of a well known, if oversimplified triadic formula:

> ...the given world-form or creative self-objectification of spirit is the 'thesis', the world apprehended by the knowing self as an alien and hostile object is the 'anti-thesis', and the world repossessed by the knowing self as a mental content is the 'synthesis'. (1961, p.60)

Feuerbach's inversion of the Hegelian dialectic.

Ludwig Feuerbach was associated with the group of disciples of Hegel known as the Young Hegelians, the most prominent of whom were Karl Marx, Freidrich Engels, Arnold Ruge, Bruo Bauer and Max Stirner. These young men engaged in a criticism of State and society during the reactionary period in Prussia following the July Revolution of 1830 in France. Feuerbach contributed an incisive critique of religion in The Essence of Christianity and subsequent writings in which he posited the notion that religion represented an inverted picture of reality, and he called for a "religion of man in place of God" (Engels and Marx, 1939, p. x). This theme dominated Feuerbach's work from the initial critique of religion, through his attack on orthodox (Christian) philosophers, and finally in the inversion of Hegelian idealism, for which Marx attributed to him a general theoretical revolution (Tucker, 1961, p. 95). Tucker (p.97) claims that Feuerbach was the "fulcrum of the movement of thought from Hegelianism to Marxism...he freed Marx's mind from its bondage to (Hegel's system)...by suggesting that it was an inverted representation of human reality, a reflection in the philosopher's mind of the existential condition of man in the natural world" (Tucker, 1961, p.97). Wartofsky considers Feuerbach to be much more than a transitional figure between Hegel and Marx; rather, "an epochal figure in the history of philosophy, for the originality and fundamental character of his critique of the philosophy itself" (1977, p.1)

Hyppolite (1974) said that "Feuerbach preserves religion only to negate its essential elements" (p.532). Indeed, he considered the critique of religion to be essential to human emancipation, for it was within religion that he believed he had found the paradigm for the process of alienation. Rather than accepting the notion of Hegel's Absolute Idea, which alienates itself as nature, then proceeds on a journey of self-discovery, transcending its alienation, Feuerbach posits an oppositional formula which takes the real, earthly human, embedded in natural forces, as a primary reality - an earthly reality that Feuerbach argues is philosophical "in the sense that processes imputed by Hegel to spirit are actually operative in man" (Tucker, 1961, p.96). Religion is a primary source of alienation, according to Feuerbach, because "man (severs) from himself those powers

and capacities which were at least potentially his; he had projected them into a God or fetish. He had thus made himself a slave to one of his own creations" (Kamenka, 1970, p.114)

Feuerbach considered alienation to be a form of intellectual error, which could be cured by an analysis of its content. In The Essence of Christianity (1841), he details the valuable attributes of humanity that have been ascribed to a Being set over and above humanity: love, understanding, mercy, compassion, justice, will and intelligence, to name but a few "species characteristics" that have been converted into this Divine Being. By projecting all of the positive qualities and potentials of the human species into the transcendent sphere and objectifying them as God, man, he argues, reduces himself to a pitiful, miserable, sinful creature. Feuerbach goes so far as to suggest that "all of the horrors of Christianity have flowed out of faith and out of the associated doctrine that only God has dignity and man is sinful" (Kamenka, 1970, p. 52). Creation and miracles are portrayed by Feuerbach as acts of imaginative will, indifferent to causality, which provide a fantasy-gratification of man's desire to master nature and escape from causal necessity.

Feuerbach was not opposed to what he perceived as the "essence" of religion - the longings and ethical valuations expressed in religion. He insisted that the element of alienation, of setting over and above himself what rightly belongs to man, increases as religion reflects upon itself and acquires a theoretical base - as it becomes theology. Theology, to Feuerbach, represented the final severing of God from man, thus consummating the alienation of humankind's highest qualities from itself and depressing even further the incomplete (thus sinful) man that is left over (Kamenka, 1970, p. 54) Feuerbach's critique of dogmatic belief was accompanied by an attack on orthodox (Christian) philosophers, whom he condemned as anthropomorphizing philosophers, bound to the finitude of sense-imagery, and unable to transcend the faculty of imagination to engage in reason. His first postdoctoral published work, Thoughts on Death and Immortality, was an open attack on theology in the service of a police state, and its revolutionary content put the seal on Feuerbach's hopes for either an academic or a literary career. He turned thereafter to philosophic work, most of it accomplished in rural isolation. His critique of religion served as a foundation for his critique of speculative philosophy, which he considered responsible for intensifying the alienation and abstraction begun by ordinary religion.

Some analysts consider Feuerbach a foundation stone of modern atheism. Indeed, the God of the theologians and the Being of Substance of the metaphysicians are, to Feuerbach, nothing but human consciousness of its own nature, or human self-consciousness formulated in an alienated way. However, he does not reduce humans to a conglomerate of atoms, but rather raises them up from the status of a divine reflection to the status of conscious, sensate individuals who achieve universality by their activity. He understood religion to be a stage of growth in human self-consciousness, and in this sense was neither a positivist nor an atheist, "but an 'emergentist', for whom religion is a serious, (and dialectically necessary) expression of a certain stage of human self-

understanding" (Wartofsky, p.6). This is remarkably similar to Hegel's evaluation of religious consciousness.

Feuerbach and Marx

Karl Marx "saw in Feuerbach the anti-Hegel who had accomplished single-handedly the revolutionary overthrow of 'the system'" and considered Feuerbach to have led "the way out of the wilderness of Hegelian Idealism to real man in the material world" (Tucker, 1961, p.95). But Hegelianism retained a certain truth-value for Marx as it did for Feuerbach—albeit an inverted one—and he perceived the world of Hegelian philosophical consciousness, in which spirit is alienated from itself and engaged in a process of transcendence of alienation as nothing but a mystical representation of the condition of humans in the real world, the earthly reality being man's estrangement from himself. The main subject of Marx's early work thus became the self-alienation of humans. One of the principle themes that began to emerge in his work was that "man's ultimate end is simply to become fully human, which he can not be so long as he remains alienated from himself in religious fantasies of self-realization" (Tucker, 1961, p.99). He develops the Feuerbachian thought that religion is but a consolation for man's failure to achieve full humanity, a theme which underlies the well known and much misunderstood statement that "Religion is the opiate of the people."

However great Marx's debt to Feuerbach, he quickly began, true to the spirit of critical thought, to engage in criticism of his associate. In 1843, he joined with Bakunin and Ruge to plan the radical Deutsch-Franzo Sische Jahrbucher of 1844, "in which he launched himself on the path from Feuerbach to Marxism" (Kamenka, 1970, p.117). His disagreements with Feuerbachian thought are explicated in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, written in the spring of 1845 as he and Engels began their collaboration on The German Ideology. One essential difference between him and Feuerbach was the importance Marx placed on "human sensuous activity, practice" (Engels and Marx, 1939, p.197), the revolutionary transformation of existing social conditions as opposed to Feuerbach's focus on the reorientation of thinking, a critical-cognitive transformation on the scale of all humanity. Feuerbach's emphasis was on "turning inward in search of a solution for self-alienation, whereas...(Marx's focus was on)...the need to turn outward against the world" (Tucker, 1961, p.101). Marx demanded the radical alteration of existing life situations in state and society in order for full human nature to be realized (Engels and Marx, 1939).

In the seventh thesis (on Feuerbach), Marx accused Feuerbach of a failure to see that "religious temperament itself is a social product and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs to a particular form of society" (Engels and Marx, 1939, p.199). Within this thesis lies one of Marx's primary criticisms of Feuerbach's thinking--that as concrete and naturalized as Feuerbach's conception of man is, it lacks the historical, social and developmental categories that would concretize the notion of "species-being" (a concept that will be elaborated later in this paper). This criticism leads Marx to the position, enunciated in the eighth thesis, that "all social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which urge theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice" (Engels et al., p.199). Marx believed that

"there is no way of ending alienation short of revolutionizing the world in which man finds himself existing in an inhuman condition" (Tucker, 1961, p.102). As he states in his eleventh thesis, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point is, to change it" (Engels et al., p.199). Marx conceived of religion as the theoretical form of alienation, but recognized the many diverse practical forms of alienation present in every single sphere of human activity--the state, the law, the family, morality, and not least of all, economic life. Thus he enlarged and extended the concept of human alienation, providing a sociological frame of reference, and began a life-long critique of existing political, economic and social conditions.

With the inversion of the Hegelian dialectic brought about by Feuerbach's humanist revision, humans, rather than an abstract Absolute Spirit become the central subject of the historical process. With this inversion, the "abstract, universal subject is recognized as an alienation itself" (Somerville, 1974, p.293). This reform of the Hegelian dialectic and the reevaluation and discussion of the problems at the root of Hegel's philosophy informed the foundation of Marx's emerging economic/political theory as developed in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. Contained within these manuscripts is both a critique which reveals the inadequacies and mistakes of the existing political economy and the basis and justification for the transformation of these conditions. In it, Marx develops the science of the necessary conditions for the communist revolution, a revolution that signified not just a realignment of economic factors, but the

> ...positive abolition...of human self-alienation...the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man...the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. (Marx, in Fromm, 1961, p.127)

The potential reconciliation of contradictions implied in the above quote indicate that Marx was committed to the conception of a logically prior, universal alienation from which minor empirical alienations derive. It is around this broad generic sense of alienation as a logical concept that much of the confusion about Marx's thinking centers. Part of the problem stems from the residual Hegelianism contained in the manuscripts. According to Gregor, Marx here uses the concept of alienation to identify "the necessary process by which man objectifies himself as a species-being and thereby creates his world..." (in Somerville, 1974, p.295). The result of this human sensuous activity is spoken of a "private property" but in a broad, undifferentiated sense, not in the narrow sense of political economy. He can thus state that though private property appears to be the cause of alienated labor, it is really the consequence (when alienation is conceived in its ontological sense). At this point in his thinking, Marx conceived of human sensuous activity as having the same developmental and dialectical character attributed to the Absolute Spirit by Hegel. To some critics the idea of self-alienation is untenable because it implies a fixed and unchangeable human essence or nature. But Marx conceived of alienation, not from an "ideal" but from historically created human possibilities and humanity's own capacity for freedom and creativity (Bottomore, 1983).

Marx uses both a biological and an historical model to define human nature. Within the biological model people are distinguished from the animals by their intellect, emotion and will, their ability to reflect upon themselves and their environment, and to consciously create and produce (Walliman, 1981, p.12). The key words that express this biological conception of humanity are "powers" and "needs." "Natural" powers and needs are those he shares with other living beings. "Species" powers and needs are those that humans alone possess, that set them apart as a "species-being" (a phrase coined from Feuerbach). Powers exist in humans as faculties, abilities, functions, and capacities, and distinctive needs are created at different stages of history. As a "species-being", man has an awareness of his individuality, a self-consciousness (Ollman, 1971, p.74). In addition to this general theory of human nature based on the biological model, Marx introduced the notion of specific, historical criteria that determine not immutable, but changeable characteristics. Most misinterpretations of Marx's theory of human nature are probably due to a failure to distinguish between the two components of human nature, the biological and the historical (Walliman, 1981, p.21).

Marx consciously avoids speculation as to initial causes, dismissing the question of creation as a pure product of abstract speculation. For him, nature and humans exist on their own account, the result of spontaneous generation, and for Marx, all history begins "with the social activity of natural man; everything begins to exist for man at the moment when his natural being (i.e. powers) begin to work on and in nature in order to satisfy his natural human needs" (Axelos, 1976, p.218). It is characteristic of natural powers to seek fulfillment in external objects, hence the relations between needs and powers. Man feels "impulses" (needs), his abilities enable him to realize his powers, which satisfy needs, and his "tendencies" direct this realization toward certain goals.

In his early writing, Marx reminds us that individuals stand in interaction with each other, but it is in The Grundrisse that he postulates that human interaction is qualitatively different from that of the animals. The proof of this difference, for him, is that humans are capable of producing objects that can satisfy other's needs, thus reaching beyond their own individual needs. As further evidence of the social nature of man, he writes:

> If man is confronted by himself, he is confronted by the other man...in fact, every relationship in which man (stands) to himself, is realized and expressed only in the relationship in which man stands to other men. (Marx, in Walliman, 1981, p.17)

Walliman suggests that the biological model and the historical model, while mutually exclusive, are not irreconcilable but complementary. While the biological model determines those characteristics that distinguish man from the animals, and thus defines human nature, the historical model alone can explain differences in human behavior (nature) over time.

Totality and the Philosophy of Internal Relations

In Marx's "holistic" thinking, human nature contains all of nature as well as man, and the realization (objectification) of man's powers in nature is the transfer of elements within an organic whole; further, these powers are related to their own past and future forms as well as to other entities in the present (Ollman, 1971, p.75). These assumptions hint at the importance and the controversy that the concept of totality has maintained throughout the development of both Marxist and non-Marxist discourse. Roberto Unger writes, "There is no single tendency in the history of modern social thought more remarkable in its persistence or more far reaching in its influence than the struggle to formulate a plausible version of the idea of totality" (1975, p.125). The concept of totality is central to any discussion of alienation, as the concept of a unified, coherent, harmonious whole contrasts with, and thus defines, such conditions as alienation, estrangement, fragmentation and contradiction. The enduring appeal of Marx's philosophy may indeed lie in a fundamental need for coherence and totality which characterizes human life and thought.

The concept of totality is generally categorized as either a) normative, in which totality is equated with a desirable goal that is to be achieved, or b) non-normative, which stems from a methodological insistence that adequate understanding of complex phenomena can follow only from an appreciation of their relational integrity (Jay, 1984). It is within this latter, non-normative framework that Marx's theory of internal relations finds expression, a theory which is useful in clarifying his concept of unity, both spatial and temporal, of humans with all the rest of nature. Understanding this relational aspect of things to each other provides us with a conceptual framework for understanding Marx's view of both concepts and social components, as well as things, as relational.

Ollman presents four evidences to defend the centrality of relational theory in Marx's thinking. First, is the tendency of Marx to attribute both the quality of isolate existence (thing-ness) and the quality of relationship to all entities (human and otherwise). Thus he can call a person both a living, conscious thing, and an aggregate of social relations. Secondly, he treats humans and nature as inextricably linked, not only in a metaphoric or poetic way, but as processes whose evolutions are dynamically connected. Third, is his apparent rejection of simple causal explanations derived from commonsense views of nature (the sun causes the plant to grow) in favor of a view that posits physical objects (sun and plant) as having their natures "outside themselves, such that the relations between them is conceived as appertaining to each, and is part of the full meaning conveyed by their respective concepts" (Ollman, 1971, p.28). Fourth, the ideas contained in relational thinking are consistent with the philosophical tradition in which Marx was nurtured, that of Spinoza, Leibniz and Hegel, a mode of inquiry that sought for both the meanings of things, and for the terms characteristic of their relations within the whole. Ollman concedes that the philosophy of internal relations is in some disrepute, but insists that the burden of proof rests with those who believe Marx discarded it, in which case he demands to know the conception of things and social factors that replaced it. For the purpose of the development of this argument, I will assume, with Ollman, that the philosophy of internal relations is foundational to the development of Marx's thinking about alienated labor.

Alienated labor.

There is considerable discrepancy in the use of the related terms, *alienation* and *estrangement* by both Marx and his many translators. Walliman presents evidence based on careful linguistic analysis to show that while *entausserung* is used predominately to describe "any situation which somebody divests...himself of something, be it property in the form of a thing, land, or one's own labor power," and is predominately translated as *alienation*, the word *entfremdung* (estrangement) appears to designate a particular, stronger form of alienation, in which the previous owner of a thing is affected in a way which is beyond his control (1981, p. 42).

Work, in Marx's view, is the essence of human life, the process by which humans create the world and thus create themselves. Any productive activity thus constitutes a generalized type of alienation, or externalization. With the involuntary division of labor and the advent of private property, labor loses the characteristic of being expressive of humans' unique powers and assumes "an existence separate from man, his will and his planning" (Fromm, 1961, p. 47). **Alienation thus becomes estrangement when people cease to exercise direction over their own productive activity.** The object produced under coercion (for under the system of capitalist relations, most people have no choice but to "work for a living") becomes "an alien being, a power independent of the producer" (Marx, 1961, p. 95). Labor becomes embodied in an object, a physical thing, and this product thus becomes an *objectification* of labor. Just as Feuerbach thought that human beings diminish in relation to what they attribute to God, Marx contends that humans diminish in relation to the life they pour into the creation of such objects:

> The alienation of the worker in his object is expressed as follows in the laws of political economy; the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more value he creates the more worthless he becomes; the more refined his product the more crude and misshapen the worker; the more civilized the product the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the work the more feeble the worker; the more the work manifests intelligence the more the worker declines in intelligence and becomes a slave of nature (Marx, 1961, p. 97).

Thus work becomes extraneous to the worker's true desires and does not fulfill, but denies her innermost needs. In this way, **people are prevented from fully developing their mental and physical powers,** and the relations between a worker's activity and her powers remain at a low level of achievement. When people create objects under conditions of estranged labor, objects take on a certain power by distorting the normal relations between a person and his or her objects: the worker must adjust to the demands of the product and the mode of production (re: the need to match the worker's rhythm to that of the machine in factory work, or the need for the teacher to stick to the script). The worker no longer employs the means of production, but vice versa: products precede and create need (DVD players create a need for DVD disks) and products create the mode of living (witness the modern slavery to the automobile and the way it has restructured time, space, and community).

So, the concept of alienated labor has two main components: **the relation of the worker to the activity itself and the relation to the object created, or the product.** Alienation to the activity occurs because of the contradiction between a person's free, reflective, autonomous nature and the exploitation of her labor and powers by an alien force outside herself:

> Alienation is apparent not only in the fact that my means of life belong to someone else, that my desires are the unattainable possession of someone else, but that everything is something different from itself, that my activity is something else, and finally (and this is also the case for the capitalist) that an inhuman power rules over everything (Marx, 1961, p. 151).

Labor – life activity – now becomes only a means for a satisfaction of a need, the need to maintain physical existence, not the central meaning-making activity of life. Marx considered it an essential aspect of human nature to reproduce itself by appropriating external nature and expressing itself in the creation of real, sensuous objects. This "objectification" is a pre-condition for the self-conscious development of people. The conflict occurs when people relinquish the object as part of his or her essence, allow it to become independent and overpowering, a possibility that becomes a reality under conditions of estranged labor and private property (Marcuse, 1972).

Though some Marxist analysts maintain that the concept of alienation and estrangement disappeared in Marx's later work, to be replaced by such concepts as reification (Israel, 1976) or by terms such as private property, class domination, exploitation, and division of labor (Bottomore, 1983), others, such as Fromm (1961), contend that the concept remained the focal point in the thinking of both the "young" Marx who write the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts and the "old" Marx who wrote Capital (p. 51). Becker (1967) believes that while not abandoning the concept, Marx shifted ground from the ideal to the possible. The assertion that Marx abandoned the concepts in his later work is weak on at least two counts, according to Walliman (1981). First, although a certain vocabulary distinguished these ideas in his early work, Marx's theory of estrangement is derived from his definition of human nature, a definition that remains consistent in both his early and his later work. Secondly, in response to those who maintain that Marx abandoned the terms "alienation" and "estrangement", Mézáros (1972) shows that he actually continued to make use of the terms in his later writings, though not as frequently as in the Manuscripts.

Alienated labor and the discourse of schooling

> Educators at the public school levels are under massive assault in this country. Not only are they increasingly losing their autonomy and capacity for imaginative teaching, they increasingly bear the burden, especially in the urban centers, of overcrowded classes, limited resources, and hostile legislators (Giroux, 1998).

Although Marx's theory of alienated labor was conceived at a time when "labor" was analogous to "factory work", contemporary Marxist and neo-Marxist scholars have applied the major concepts to aspects of the work of teaching. In this section, I note some of the major themes in this work by highlighting the voices of the teachers in our graduate program, focusing specifically on the contradiction presented by policies supposedly designed to promote social equity for students, which have, in effect, produced a condition of alienated labor for the teachers who work with them daily. I draw upon Bottomore's (1983) notion of an "historical (or temporal) dialectical contradiction" (p. 110); that is, a situation in which forces of non-independent origins operate in such a way so that one force (A) tends to produce or is itself the product of conditions which simultaneously or subsequently produce a countervailing force (B), tending to frustrate, annul, subvert, or transform A. In other words, if we consider the initiation of the highly structured, rigidly controlled curriculum ostensibly applied to mitigate the achievement gap between poor, mostly students of color and their more white middle class counterparts, as one force, against the deskilling of their teachers, many of whom are themselves people of color from the working classes, do the effects of these forces countervail, or cancel each other out? If the stated social goal of a program is more equality, but one of the major components of the program effects the deskilling of teachers, creating a teaching force engaged in alienated labor, is this progress?

In the next section of the paper, I turn from the theoretical dimensions of the concepts of alienation to the practical and the concrete manifestations, highlighting six concepts (deskilling, proletarianization, objectification, intensification, reification, and resistance) drawn from my understanding of Marx's theory of alienated labor and from neo-Marxist work that emerged from the theory, that seem to connect to how teachers talk about their labor in interviews, in their reading journals, and in their critical papers written for graduate classes. The concepts are not discrete; in fact they overlap and interpenetrate in a way reminiscent of Marx's theory of internal relations. In this analysis, I rely not on some authentic state of "being" from which teachers feel universally alienated. This is a philosophical problem of some magnitude that thinkers greater than I have wrestled with for centuries (re: Rousseau's effort to describe a 'natural man' in an unalienated state). The practical problem is that low income and minority children are being taught by teachers who work under oppressive conditions, subject to a tyrannical management paradigm that stifles their professional growth, and thus undermines genuine and long lasting improvement of their schools. For the purposes of this argument, I conceptualize "de-alienation" as a moving horizon defined by continuous intellectual growth, the refinement of craft, the integration of conception and execution, enhanced creativity, and consistent use of and improvement in the quality of professional judgments. I will address this further in my conclusion.

1. Deskilling is, in simple terms, the separation of conception from execution, and is internally related to the other concepts listed below. "Skilled" labor is analogous to the work of the pre-industrial craftsperson who creatively conceived of the design and form of his or her work and carried out the project from start to finish. This is compared with the modern mass production laborer, who neither conceives of nor designs the product that they labor to produce, and who only performs a fragment of the production process.

While teachers are not factory workers, some scholars have drawn analogies between the "techné" of the artisan, the factory worker, and the teacher, pointing out the ways that the work of teaching, as it becomes less an art and more a technical process, comes to resemble mass production. Michael Apple has written extensively about the deskilling of teachers, noting that teachers have been

> more and more faced with the prospect of being deskilled because of the encroachment of technical control procedures into the curriculum in schools. The integration together of management systems, reductive behaviorally based curricula, pre-specified teaching 'competencies' and procedures and student responses, and pre and post testing, was leading to a loss of control and a separation of conception from execution (1986, p. 32).

Patrick Shannon has applied this analysis to reading programs throughout the United States, demonstrating the ways in which reading "experts" and basal textbook publishers have assumed the function of the conception of reading instruction, while instructional guidebooks, with their prepared scripts, worksheets, and tests have "stripped teachers of the skills of their craft" (1989, p. 84). And this "legislated learning *makes teachers more accountable to the state than ever before*", (emphasis mine) as "new state initiatives attempt to standardize the goals, monitor student progress closely, and regulate teaching methods" (p. 85).

N. is a new kindergarten teacher who did her student teaching with an experienced teacher/ researcher, and is in our literacy graduate program. She describes her work in terms of this deskilling:

> ...the superintendent of my district took the reading curriculum that we use, and she devised her own lesson plans on the ways we should teach, what we should say, how we should have our charts printed, how they should be hanging in the room, and what the children should know if she should come and question them. The superintendent...said we must do it the way she scripted it in two folders that she gave us. They go right down to what we should say to introduce the follow up, what the follow up should be, and what the children should be assessed on once it's the end of the week.

The requirement to "have the charts in the right place" and to use the correct color of markers highlighting the "to do" for the day is pervasive, indicating the degree to which teachers are not even trusted to perform the most mundane classroom tasks without specific guidelines. Teachers can no longer even exercise the "skill" of deciding how to make educational charts. Deskilling, says Barry Kanpol (1994),

> is at its peak when teachers are denied or have much less autonomy and less control over the teaching process than they think they have. By making teachers accountable for state-mandated curriculum (such as basal

> reading materials) and by promoting competency-based education, system management, and employing rigid and dehumanizing forms of evaluation along with numerical rating scales, teachers are controlled and simply march to the tune of the state (p. 38).

Deskilling is not merely a professional issue, then, it is a political issue, as it is employed not just to control the labor of teachers, but also to ensure conformity of student thinking. In scripted teaching, there is one correct student response, and few opportunities are provided for divergent, lateral, connected, or critical thinking.

2. Proletarianization is the movement of sections of the middle class labor force into the working class by nature of the character of their labor. If class is defined by one's relation to the processes of production, then teachers occupy a somewhat ambiguous class position. Most consider themselves professionals, and indeed their level of schooling signifies professional status. At the same time, they are supervised by managers, suggesting that their labor belongs more in the "working class" category. I suggest here that the class status of teachers cannot be generalized, depending as it does on variables such as the state in which they teach, the leadership in their district and school, their experience and their credentials. However, for the teachers I work with, most of whom are teachers of color in low performing city schools, hierarchically structured command and control systems characterize their labor, and their working conditions are characterized by increasing loss of control over the labor process and a extraordinary lack of autonomy. A distinct class of managers, including supervisors, superintendents, principals, staff developers, and trainers, oversees a class of teacher/workers, creating a sort of class warfare involving surveillance, threat, punishment, and public shaming:

> ...we are told time and time again you must be doing this, you must be doing it. And I don't know of anyone who's experienced the consequences, but they say you get a letter in your file. They just simply say, you must be doing it...so, to some degree, you get singled out in staff development when you are not doing it correctly. Where you could almost tell which teacher they are talking about. Like they'll say 'well I went in this second grade teacher's room." They'll make it where you could pretty much decide as professionals who they are talking about. So you get called out in professional development if you are not doing it, and you get threatened that you will get a letter in your file if you vary from the curriculum (Interview with E., 4th grade teacher in East Harlem).

Shannon (1989) notes the ways in which administrators "seem content to let the basal publishers choose the goals, methods, and assessment for reading instruction, focusing their efforts on *managing* teachers' use of the chosen materials in order to render it more effective and efficient in raising students' test scores" (p. 87). In this way, the managerial/supervisory class become *enforcers*, ensuring that teachers stick to the script, and march in tune to the curriculum drum. From the perspective of estranged labor, teachers working under conditions of surveillance and threat are prevented from fully

developing their mental and physical powers, and the relations between a worker's activity and her powers remain at a low level of achievement.

3. Objectification is the idea that under conditions of alienated labor, there is estrangement from the object created, or the product. The notion of students as products has a long and unsavory history in education, dating back at least to the oft-cited words of Elwood Cubberly:

> Our schools are in a sense, factories in which the raw materials are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of the twentieth century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils to the specifications laid down. This demands good tools, specialized machinery, continuous measurement of production (1919, p. 503).

What is the product in the teaching/learning relationship? The student? Knowledge? Student products – writing, artwork, worksheets, tests? Under conditions of alienated labor the "product" is a constellation of all of these things, but most important now is the ubiquitous test score. Teachers and schools increasingly are expected to produce ever higher test scores, and their labor in this regard is reminiscent of the assembly line (ask any fourth grade teacher preparing for the ELA). When test scores are the primary indicator of successful teaching, as is true now for many city teachers, students become objects to be manipulated within a narrow set of regulatory processes. Teachers are prohibited from responding authentically to the full humanness of their students. Student work becomes an "alien object" produced under coercion; unconnected to desire or genuine need it is "an alien being, a power independent of the producer" (Marx, 1961, p. 95). One teacher (L.) writes in her reading journal:

> We are considered a low performing school because our children don't reach the standards that were written for them by people outside the classroom…people who do not know our children write these standards; they do not know their needs…we, as teachers, are handed a list of things that we have to teach to children and time limits to teach it. They give us this information without even taking into consideration what prior knowledge the students have or what topics they are interested in—something needs to change to help these children succeed.

L. clearly understands that if "work" is not related to what students already know or to topics that they have some interest in, teaching and learning will not be effective—and these students will not succeed. Teaching is, at its most basic level, about relationship. Warmth, connection, and caring are essential to the endeavor. When teachers are under duress to make their students "perform", when one's career is on the line with student test scores the deciding factor of success, the teaching and learning relationship is reduced to

one of coercion. Students and their thinking become objects to be manipulated towards predetermined ends.

4. Intensification occurs when the pace and timing of labor processes are speeded up to accommodate new production demands. Because schools are not factories, nor are they profit-making enterprises with balance sheets of gain and loss, one would think, as Shannon (1989) suggests, that they "should have escaped the logic of production which seeks to increase profit margins by manipulating variables in the productive process...to keep expenses at a minimum and productivity high" (p. 76). But schools are dependent upon taxpayers for their operating funds, and these taxpayers, living as they do in an increasingly *commodified* society, expect a reasonable return on their investment. Because test scores are an efficient, if not particularly meaningful, measure of student learning, "these scores become the equivalent of the profit and loss statements in business ledgers" (p. 77). In this way, pressure flows downward in the educational hierarchy, subjecting instruction to the same logic of production as the assembly line.

The intensification of labor oriented toward increased production (higher test scores) is even felt in the early elementary grades. In E.'s first grade classroom in East Harlem, there is no more "constructive playtime," no blocks, no clay, no music, no painting, and no recess:

> They go to lunch then they get to go outside and run around for 15 minutes and that is it. And they are lucky if they get that. And they just run...there's no supervised play, no equipment, there's nothing, it's just a big asphalt yard that they run around in...they work really hard during the day. It just feels like they are in the military sometimes, it's one thing after the other and it's just work, work, work.

One must ask, what is the cost of this intensification? Perhaps test scores will rise. Or perhaps this is a vivid example of Anyon's (1981) thesis concerning the social stratification of school experience. Are these children being prepared, even in first grade, for a life of mundane, repetitious labor or for service on the front lines of the military, like so many of their brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles and cousins? This denial of the most basic needs of young children, for music, art, play, hands-on experiences, and fresh air would certainly not be tolerated just a few blocks south in Manhattan.

Even in N's kindergarten classroom, the mode of production (instruction aimed at higher test scores) is shaping the consciousness of very young children:

> Friday is test day for kindergartners though fifth grade...we are told that the problem in the school is that they don't test well, they need to get used to being timed, so we were told to start timing these tests we give to kindergartners on Fridays. Well for a long time I disagreed, I didn't buy the timer. I was doing the test but I didn't buy the timer. The teacher

> trainer noticed that I never bought the timer, and she told me you have to buy the timer, and I must start timing my children on Friday test day.
>
> I just want to go back to what's becoming of them from all this testing...they are becoming very competitive at the age of five. My children understand the difference between getting seventy and one hundred on a test, to the point where they are laughing at the kids who get sixty and seventy. They already have the mindset that 'that's bad, you got a seventy and I got a hundred.' Getting competitive is not where I think kindergarten learning should be.

Schooling in capitalist America, at least in capitalist inner city New York, appears designed to cultivate cutthroat competition at the tender age of five, and to foster competitive individualism as opposed to social solidarity. And though teachers may resist in small ways (not buying the timer on time), they face retribution for not following orders.

5. Reification is a special form of alienation, signifying the process by which human relations, actions and characteristics take on the characteristics of *things*, which then become independent and come to govern human life. *Curriculum* is a profoundly human endeavor – it is the deeply felt transaction between, as Dewey put it, the *knower* and the *known*. The teacher, in the school setting, acts as mediator in this transaction, as she (under ideal conditions) comes to know the child, discerns his or her interests and needs, critically assesses the state of the world to decide what's worth knowing, and then guides the child toward more complex thinking and organized forms of knowledge. When the curriculum comes from outside of the learning exchange, in the form of textbooks or scripts, essential characteristics of the transaction are eliminated. The curriculum is not connected to student needs or interests, it therefore lacks meaning, it is only "developmentally appropriate" in the most rudimentary and universal terms, what's worth knowing is decided by bureaucrats or textbook editors, none of whom have any knowledge of the specific circumstances of the students' lives, and perhaps most egregious, the curriculum lacks internal coherence, so that nothing in the script connects to anything else, but rather presents information in a fragmented, reductive way.

Under such conditions, the curriculum becomes a *thing*, it behaves according to the logic of the *thing-world*, and most important, *it transforms both teacher and student into beings who behave in accordance with the logic of the thing-world.* How many teachers, when they do present new and worthy knowledge, are asked "will this be on the test?" What about N.s kindergartners, who already judge the worth of their classmates on their Friday test scores? These students have become governed by the logic of the dead curriculum, the curriculum that is devoid of life energy, and they know, in the end, what must be done to survive in their Darwinian world (that is itself, a reification of our relations with technology). It is a painful example of successful adaptation.

6. Resistance theory, developed most explicitly by Paul Willis (1977), in his study of white working class youth, is a neo-Marxist theory that challenges the determinism of the

base/superstructure model in Marxist reproduction theory. Resistance, according to Kanpol (1994),

> involves the conscious and unconscious attempt by anyone (but for our case, particularly teachers and students) to challenge the dominant and/or hegemonic values in our society…critical theorists look at resistance as possible acts of social and cultural transformation…resistance entails acts that counter the oppressive race, class, and gender stereotypes as well as challenges to other dominant structural values such as individualism, rampant competition, success-only orientations, and authoritarianism (p. 37).

Thankfully, I could cite numerous instances of resistance as the teachers in our program attempt, against the odds, to work in ways that are caring, critical, and just. From these, I chose the following, because I particularly liked the embedded metaphor of the "black skydiver". S., a 6th grade teacher who claims multiple identities (Puerto Rican of African descent, religious Muslim), who has been teaching for four years in a low performing school in Harlem, works within a strictly articulated set of guidelines and under pressure to raise test scores. She talks, in an interview, about the ways that she subverts the system when she feels that her (predominately African-American) students would benefit more from diverging from the script:

> We were reading about a woman who ran away from her husband because he was beating her and we were doing what's called a "touchstones" discussion and a student said 'the woman had to be white' and I said 'why would you say that?' And she said 'well, because she kept going towards the danger as opposed to…like throughout her trials while she was running away she ran into these different obstacles and as opposed to just fleeing from them she tried to stay and resolve them.' Well, the child took that and not fully understanding what the moral of the story was, which was perseverance; she said 'whenever I watch scary movies, the white woman is always staying to see what's happening instead of running away.' This turned into a little bit of a discussion about what white people do versus what black people do. And I said 'There's nothing that a white person can do that a black person can't do.' She said 'of course…black people don't skydive'. Everyone was like "yeh, black people don't skydive'… as though it were a FACT…as though everyone knows that (emphasis hers).

S. made a point of going out to find someone in her community who had been skydiving. Fortunately, the custodian had been skydiving and had videotaped it, which S. was able to bring into her class and show her students. She felt that it was important enough, in working with these children, to transform their sense of possibilities, even if it meant sacrificing drill time for the upcoming tests:

> A lot of times, I feel like those things are so important that I'd rather just get in trouble about being off schedule than not providing them with the experience. It's unfortunate that that's the choice I have to make.

This was a small act of resistance, an act that challenged the internalized race stereotypes of a group of children. It is acts like these, however, multiplied by thousands in classrooms across the country, that could inhibit the totalizing effect of capitalist (and racist) hegemonic structures and consciousness.

I want to close this section by highlighting one important theme that keeps surfacing in the experiences of these teachers, which is related to the general Marxist concept of **bureaucratism**, or **bureaucratization**, and that is the theme of *compliance*. In many cases, supervisors and managers exhibit much less concern about the actual *content* of what is going on in classrooms than they do about whether *procedures* are being followed. One teacher noted that the supervisors check to see that the charts are hanging in the right place, but do not take note of whether they had been changed from September through March. S. discusses what the role of teacher feels like, and what she senses is valued by her managers:

> I often feel that they think if your classroom is quiet the children are learning. If they stand in line and they can't be heard in the hallway, then you're a wonderful teacher. Classroom management is key – it's a statement I've heard over and over again. Because of that, what happens is as long as your class is well behaved and your room is pretty and you have all the rubrics up and everything that is supposed to be up is up, they really don't bother you as much. Because of that you will be able to have more freedom…

Play by the bureaucratic rules, don't make waves, make sure the rubrics are posted. Then perhaps, just perhaps, you can close the door and teach in accordance with your principles.

Conclusion.

Marxist theories of education took shape in the United States with the publication of Bowles and Gintis' Schooling in Capitalist America (1976), which developed the argument that schools in a capitalist society reproduced the skills, forms of knowledge, and differentiated status necessary to the existing labor hierarchy in the society. Critical of the determinism of this work, scholars such as Michael Apple, Paul Willis, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren developed the ideas of human agency (the idea that a simplistic base/superstructure model failed to account for human will and desire) and resistance (the idea that teachers and students, working critically together, could resist oppressive educational and social policies and practices), successfully demonstrating that the reproductive tendencies in education are never complete and are subject to conflict and transformation. Unfortunately, Marxist and neo-Marxist theorizing has had relatively little impact on the nature of contemporary schooling, due to a number of factors: the

inaccessible language of the major theorists, the primary location of the organizing ideas in universities and academic journals (with notable exceptions, such as the work of the Rouge Forum, and journals such as *Radical Teacher* and *Rethinking Schools*), the increasing bureaucratization and standardization of the curriculum through the standards and high stakes testing initiatives, the inherent conservatism of the institution of schooling, and perhaps most important, the totalizing effects of capitalist mentality permeating the various structures and institutions of society. What is to suggest that a revived strategy of Marxist theorizing will be any more successful now than it has been in the past?

Macro and micro forms of resistance.

A full exploration of this question is clearly beyond this paper, but one point to note is that youth organizing (against imperialism, war, the deleterious effects of global capitalism), aided and assisted by the Internet, is up from its 1960's peak. Young people are beginning to make the connections between what they learn and don't learn in school, and what is going on in the world. Last time this happened, free schools and educational alternatives sprung up across the country. Free school ideology coupled with multiple forms of social activism, according to Miller (2002), who has chronicled the rise and fall of the Free School movement, "was not just an academic discussion but a call to action that helped produce an unprecedented popular movement for serious educational reform" (p. 109). For the purposes of this argument, I am characterizing this sort of mass social/educational movement *macro-resistance*. We have many lessons to learn from this history, both about transformative possibilities *and* about the fragility of non-authoritarian educational experiments in an authoritarian society. While I hope to see a renewal of this educational activism, my enthusiasm is somewhat tempered by years of struggle in the alternative/progressive school movement. I focus my attention then, on what we need to do to prepare teachers in public schools to recognize the nature of alienated labor, to imagine other social and educational possibilities than the ones they are "given," and to act in ways that reclaim the educational process in the service of democracy and human development – to engage in acts of *micro-resistance*.

Central to a revived Marxist theory of education is the idea that capitalist education is dedicated to the creation of a differentiated work force, disciplined to contemporary modes of production. What is going on in city schools can only be read skeptically as serving the present and future necessity for a large reserve pool of labor for the deskilled jobs of the new "service economy" (fast food, retail clerks, janitors) and military service for the new imperialism. Even if the oversimplified, rote learning of the new teaching scripts results in improved standardized test scores for some poor children, students fed a steady diet of such pap for their entire school career will still emerge cognitively impoverished and politically shortchanged, without the critical and creative thinking that might have been fostered by a more meaningful curriculum.

Also central to a revived Marxist theory of education is the fact that capitalism is characterized by, and exists upon, alienated labor. Teachers who work in low performing schools, and increasingly, in schools everywhere, experience some degree of alienation under the new standards and high stakes testing regime. Many, especially the talented

ones, are simply leaving the profession. Others resist in small ways, sneaking in arts projects, meaningful literature, and videos about black skydivers on the sly, when the supervisors are not watching. Some veteran teachers, confident in their craft and fortunate enough to have affirmative leadership, continue to practice their profession with integrity. I believe that it is important to examine these aspects of educational reality (reproduction and alienated labor) alongside each other, to reveal important contradictions in education as well as to strategize resolutions to the contradictions.

One site for struggle, then, is the move towards conscientization, defined for this purpose as the awareness of one's position in the Master/Slave relationship and a sense of the possibilities for overcoming, or transcending that relationship. A dialectical form of education must start with given conditions, a clear understanding of one's alienation – a *thesis*. Then it must have a vision of possibility – the possibility that education does not need to be oppressive, stifling, competitive, and demoralizing for both teachers and students. Teachers and students need to understand that education could be (indeed, has been, at moments) dedicated to, and characterized by creativity, care, social justice, equity, and critical awareness of the world – an *anti-thesis*. A dialectical form of education, based on Marx's ideas of species-being, would be dedicated to the development of human powers, creative expression, and a complementary mix of autonomy and solidarity – a *synthesis*. While Hegel assigned this reflective activity to Absolute Spirit, operating in and through human beings, and Feuerbach assigned it to critical/cognitive transformations of consciousness, Marx assigns the development of human creative powers to humans themselves, fulfilling their needs through their labor processes. Reflective teaching, informed by critique generated by Marxist analysis, could form the basis of such a dialectical materialist form of practice.

Teacher education in universities is a crucial space for this conscientization to occur, which may partially explain moves to limit university participation in teacher preparation. Though the attack on teacher education programs (by media, government and other institutions) is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth examining the forms of knowledge available to pre-service teachers in "alternative certification" and "clinical site" preparation programs. The "educational foundations" are notably absent from such programs. In our graduate teacher education program at LIU, all students take an introductory course, *Issues in Urban Education*, that focuses on issues related to educational equity: school funding, race and ethnicity, social class, tracking, testing, the differentiated curriculum, inclusion, and gender (the short list). Though the focus is on the critique of existing institutional arrangements, there is an effort to alleviate the inevitable despair by highlighting promising practices, especially in relation to themes of connecting to the community, valuing (cultural and linguistic) differences, and democratic schooling.

With this critique as a foundation, students then proceed to take relevant methods courses, which all have a critical component as well as field work, and three teacher inquiry/research courses, based in the phenomenological study of the child and reflective teaching. It is in these inquiry courses that the contradiction between the actual work they are engaged in and the possibilities for education based in human freedom,

creativity, justice and care, becomes most glaring. For example, in their teacher research, we ask that they come to know the child's full range of capacities through analyzing student work in a variety of modalities: movement, visual art, creative writing, journal entries, play, etc. For many of our teachers, these opportunities simply do not exist in the context of the scripted curriculum, and thus they come to comprehend the constraints on what they can come to know about their students and what they can do in the classroom. Our students react in varying ways to the contradiction: jubilation at the ability to critically theorize what they have experienced and excitement at challenging the status quo, anger at us for coercing them to question the taken-for-grantedness of their work, and everything in between. One student, who did her student teaching at a mostly white, middle class progressive school and is now in a low performing city school, noted tellingly that "I liked what I saw and experienced there, but I thought that kind of education was only for white people."

Through these inquiry processes, we hope that teachers who graduate from our programs will develop their capacities for informed judgments in the context of the uncertain and complex environments of classrooms. With the confidence of judgment that comes with the ability to gather data through careful observation, assess consequences, and make decisions based on evidence as well as the research literature, we hope that teachers will assume the moral authority to challenge and resist what is not in the best interest of their students. One teacher, writing in her reading journal, expresses such developing critical consciousness about scripted teaching:

> I have heard many inexperienced teachers express gratitude for the structure provided by these carefully scripted lessons, finding them time savers, useful and supportive. The sad reality, however, is that these materials are often not used as 'guides' or suggestions, but as gospel, to be followed by rote and without deviation. Under such a system, *both* the teacher and the child become objects upon which the 'system' works its magic…such an approach serves to clearly mark the 'lines of authority'…such an approach discourages students from developing and exercising the critical skills needed to participate fully in a democratic society…students participated more, and more energetically, when their views and answers were validated and discussed, even when (perhaps especially when) those views are 'against the grain'. The central issue, though, then becomes how do we, as teachers, work effectively within 'the system' when it appears that the system's goals and purposes are *diametrically opposed* to enabling the students to develop those essential 'critical skills?'

The problems of city schools are enormous. Given such conditions as high poverty, mobility of students, under-prepared teachers and high teacher turnover, the efforts to standardize, centralize, and supervise the curriculum are understandable (if misguided). Test scores are not the only outcomes of schooling. Teachers are primary role models for children, and the working conditions and social relations of the school are an important part of the hidden curriculum. If the intention is to relegate poor students of color to the

margins of the economy, in which they will be expected to carry out menial, low skilled, alienated labor, then their teachers are performing important roles, as models of such labor. If, however, the desired outcome is really to close the achievement gap, and educate all students for active participation in a democracy as well as meaningful roles in the work force, then it is counterproductive to create conditions of alienated labor for their teachers. What would be more fruitful, in such an educational utopia, would be for teachers to be genuine free-thinking intellectuals, models of critical thought, creatively engaged and caring individuals who are responsive to student interests, and whose full cognitive and affective powers were evident in the quality of their professional judgments. Then, perhaps, just perhaps, we could find other jobs for the curriculum police.

REFERENCES CITED

Apple, M.W. (1986). Teachers and texts: A political economy of class and gender relations in education. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Axelos, K. (1976). Alienation, praxis, and technē in the thought of Karl Marx. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Becker, E. (1967). Beyond alienation. New York: George Braziller, Inc.

Bottomore, T., with Harris, L., Kiernan, V.G., & Milliband, R. (Eds.). (1983). A dictionary of Marxist thought. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Carini, P.F. (2001). Starting strong: A different look at children, schools, and standards. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cubberly, E. (1919). Public Education in the United States. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Fromm, E. (1941). Escape from freedom. New York: Avon Books.

Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. (1996). What's worth fighting for in your school? New York: Teachers College Press.

Giroux, H. (1998). The business of public education. http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/girouxjulyaug98.htm

Hegel, G.W.F. (1948). Early theological writings. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Himley, M. (2000). From another angle: Children's strengths and school standards. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hinchman, L.P. (1984). Hegel's critique of the Enlightenment. Tampa, FL: University of Florida Press.

Hyppolite, J. (1974). Genesis and structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Kamenka, E. (1970). The philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Kanpol, B. (1994). Critical pedagogy: An introduction. CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Kesson, K. (2002, in press). Cultivating Democratic Character: Reconceptualizing "Citizenship" for a Partnership Era. In Caring for life: Educating for a culture of peace, Eisler, R. & Miller, R. (Eds.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Kesson, K., Koliba, C. & Paxton, K. (2001). Democratic education and the creation of the just and loving community. In Creativity and collaborative learning: A practical guide to empowering students and teachers, Thousand, J.S., Villa, R.A., & Nevin, A.I. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Henderson, J., & Kesson, K. (1999). Understanding democratic curriculum leadership. NY: Teachers College Press.

Marx, K. (1939). "Thesis on Feuerbach" in The German Ideology. New York: International Publishers, Inc.

Marx, K. (1961). "Economic and philosophical manuscripts" in Marx's concept of man, Fromm, E. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, K. (1961). Capital. New York: International Publishers.

Mézáros, I. (1972). Marx's theory of alienation. New York: Harper Torchbook.

Miller, R. (2002). Free schools, free people: Education and democracy after the 1960's. New York: SUNY Press.
Ollman, B. (1971). Alienation. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
Shannon, P. (1989). Broken promises: Reading instruction in twentieth-century America. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
Stanley, W.B. (1992). Curriculum for utopia: Social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy in the modern era. New York: SUNY Press.
Tucker, R. (1978). The Marx-Engels reader. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
Tucker, R. (1961). Philosophy and myth in Karl Marx. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
Tyack, D. (1974). The one best system. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Unger, R. & Unger, R.M. (1975). Knowledge and politics. New York: Free Press.
Walliman, I. (1981). Estrangement: Marx's conception of human nature and the division of labor. CT: Greenwood Press.
Willis, P. (1977). Learning to labor. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Alienated Labor and the Quality of Teachers' Lives: How Teachers in Low Performing Schools Experience Their Work	
Author(s): Kathleen Kesson	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1 ✓

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please

Signature: Kathleen Kesson	Printed Name/Position/Title: Kathleen Kesson, Associate Professor
Organization/Address: Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, 1 University Plaza, Brooklyn NY 11201-5372	Telephone: 718 6021 1048 / FAX: 718 488 3472
	E-Mail Address: Kathleen.Kesson@liu.edu / Date: 7-1-03

(Over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
1129 SHRIVER LAB
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
ATTN: ACQUISITIONS

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfacility.org

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)